

Memorandum to x of Origins of Life Workshops

MASSACHUSETTS INSTITUTE OF TECHNOLOGY

DEPARTMENT OF PHYSICS

CAMBRIDGE, MASSACHUSETTS 02139

January 4, 1979

Dr. Joshua Lederberg
President, The Rockefeller University
1213 York Avenue
New York City, NY 10021

Dear Josh,

At the invitation of the NASA Exobiology people, I have agreed to chair a series of Science Workshops on the Origins of Life. The goal of the Workshops is to undertake a thorough re-examination of the current state of knowledge and to reach a consensus on promising research directions for the future. We will take a broad approach. We will draw heaviest on the earth, and to a lesser extent on the solar system: but we will also include a galactic viewpoint. Our findings will appear in summary form as a published document of book length.

I am most pleased that Melvin Calvin has agreed to be Co-Chairman of the Science Workshops. This bodes well for our success.

Our plan is to hold six two-day meetings at intervals of three or four months. The first meeting will be at the Ames Research Center on March 1st and 2nd, 1979. It will be devoted to technical discussions about the scope and content of the Workshops. The second meeting will be at Harvard or M.I.T. on May 22nd and 23rd, and will address the history of the pre-biotic elements and planetary evolution. The third meeting, in September, will be concerned with chemical evolution; the fourth, in December, with the origins of life; and the fifth, in March, 1980, with cellular and the earliest organismal evolution. The concluding meeting, to review the draft of the report, will be hosted by Josh Lederberg at the Rockefeller University in the summer of 1980.

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This letter is to invite you to be a member of the Science Workshop. As I will be out of the country for two months, perhaps you would send a copy of your reply to me to John Billingham, Chief, Extraterrestrial Research Division, NASA-Ames Research Center, Code LX, Mail Stop 239-11, Moffett Field, California, 94035--telephone number 415-965-5181. John will act as our Executive Secretary, and will need to know your response so that he can work out the details of the honorarium for all Workshop members for each meeting attended. The Ames people will assist us with logistics, manuscripts preparation, editing, secretarial activities and other resources as needed.

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It is my hope that most members of the Workshop will be able to attend most of the meetings, so that we will have a good measure of continuity.

It is my particular hope that you will be able to join us.

Sincerely,

Philip Morrison

Philip Morrison ^{PM}

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